



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Rep. Brostoff Calls for Change after the Tragic Homicide of a Man with Mental Illness**

MILWAUKEE - Rep. Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) is speaking out against the homicide of Terrill Thomas—a man who was clearly in need of medical attention for his mental illness, but instead tragically died of dehydration.

Earlier this year, Terrill Thomas died in the Milwaukee County Jail just nine days after being arrested. The water in his cell had been shut off for six days, and the inmates surrounding him reported that he had spent days begging for water. Earlier this month, his death was ruled as a homicide due to “profound dehydration.”

“The staff that was in charge of Terrill’s wellbeing spent days watching a sick man die instead of helping him get the medical treatment he needed,” Brostoff stated. “Why is it that we as a society have chosen to stigmatize some illnesses and not others? If someone had pancreatic cancer, would we think it was appropriate to lock them up in solitary confinement instead of meeting their immediate health care needs?”

Inmates suffering from mental illness are disproportionately housed in solitary confinement. The damage solitary confinement has on those with a previously existing mental illness is devastating and often permanent.

“This session, which is set to begin in January 2017, I will be introducing a Mental Wealth Package. This package will include legislation to prohibit the use of solitary confinement for inmates with severe mental illness but our efforts won't stop there. Wisconsin must increase its investment in proven treatment alternatives and diversion programs to ensure our communities are safe and prosperous. Our prisons and jails are not the appropriate place to provide the specialized health care that members of our community with mental illness need. Wisconsinites deserve better. Terrill deserved better,” Brostoff concluded.